

2019

Mental Illness Perceptions & Misconceptions Within Black Communities

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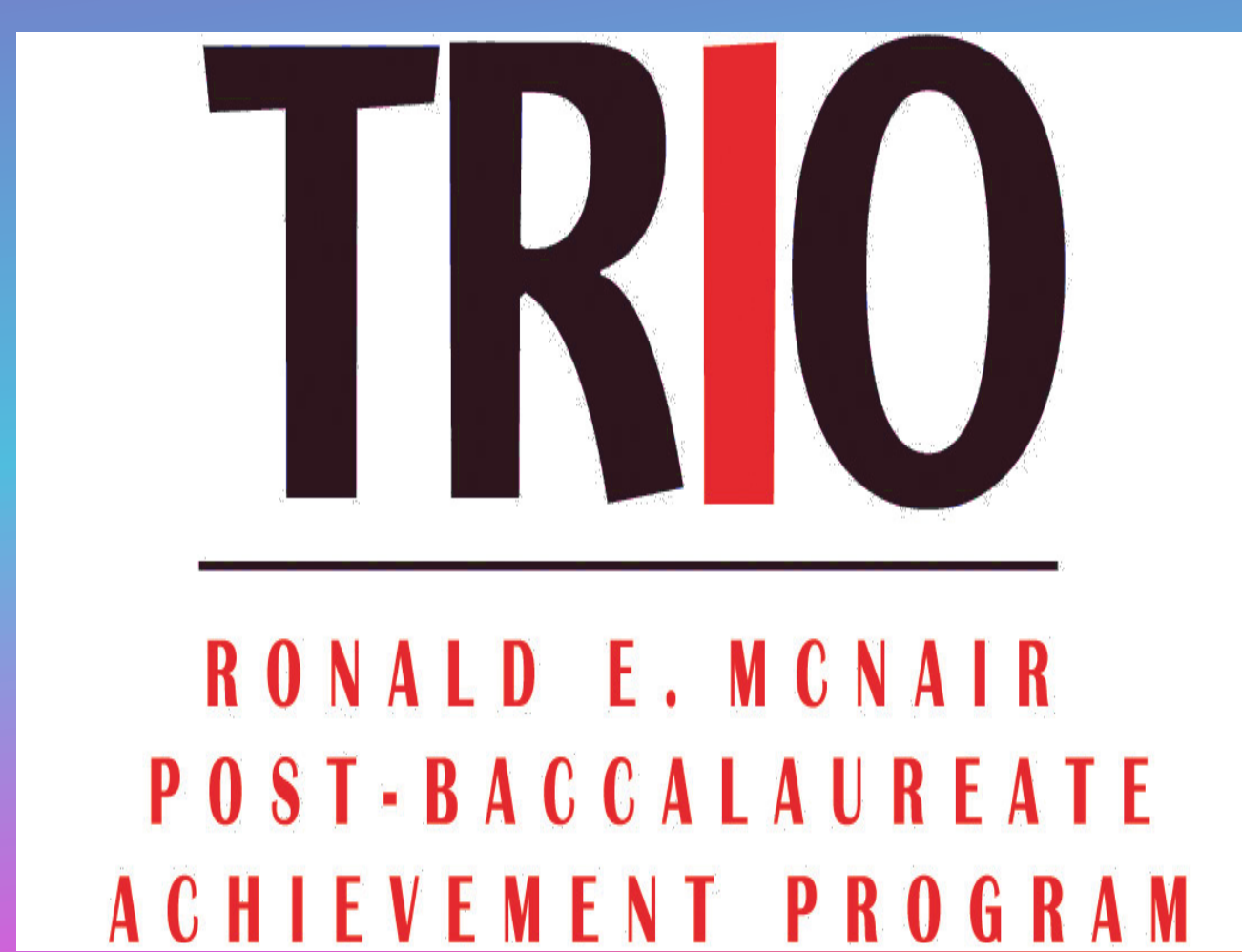
Vasciannie, Brielle, "Mental Illness Perceptions & Misconceptions Within Black Communities" (2019). *Posters@Research Events*. 36.
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Mental Illness Perceptions & Misconceptions Within Black Communities

The College At Brockport
Presenter: Brielle Vasciannie
Mentor: Dr. Malcolm M. Boston



Introduction

- The rise of mental illness in the US is increasing at an alarming rate. Approximately one in five adults will suffer from a mental illness in any given year. Along with this shocking statistic, the rates of untreated mental illness, especially within the black community has escalated.
- Mental illness and mental health are topics that tend to be stigmatized within society, specifically in the black community. This results in people believing like they can not even talk about these issues, let alone receive treatment and support.
- The goal of this research is to discover what is causing individuals to shy away from receiving help and treatment for their mental illnesses. Hopefully, In turn, we can begin to dismantle these negative ideas in order to combat the rates of untreated mental illness.

Research Question

- What are some of the perceptions and misconceptions that African Americans perpetuate about mental health and mental illness that affects help-seeking attitudes within black communities?

Statistics

- African Americans are 20% more likely to experience serious mental health problems than the general population.
- African Americans are 20% more likely to have serious psychological distress than whites.
- More than 90% of people who die by suicide show symptoms of a mental health condition. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among African Americans ages 15 to 24.
- Less than 50% of all Americans with a mental disorder receive the treatment that they need. But the proportion of African Americans who need mental health treatment and receive it is only 50% that of whites.

Methodology/Procedure

- Qualitative research utilizing an online survey and (in the future) interviews
- Created a 25 question survey that containing open-ended and yes/no questions
- Sent out the survey through the McNair program Blackboard page
- Participants were given one week to submit responses
- All the data was anonymous and collected through the survey website

Questions

- What are some words that come to mind when you think of mental illness?
- What are your views on mentally ill individuals?
- Do you think the mentally ill are dangerous?
- On a scale from 1-5 how much do you care about mental health?
- Do you feel comfortable talking about mental health?
- Does your family feel comfortable talking about mental health?
- Has anyone in your family been diagnosed with a mental illness?
- Do your beliefs correspond with how your family views mental illness?
- Have you personally received mental health treatment?



Results/Findings

- The overall fear of being "labeled" and "stigmatized"
- Family "disapproval" (lack of support)
- Stigma surrounding medication
- Negative image of mentally ill
- Lack of hope in mental health treatment
- Overall mistrust in the healthcare system
- Affordability



Limitations

- Sample only consisted of McNair individuals at Brockport
- Small sample size
- Lack of time
- Didn't ask all of the questions in the survey
- Mostly college educated participants
- Lack of age range

Further Research

- Honing in on the black church's perceptions of mental illness
- Examine age, gender and minority group differences
- Look at historical data on the treatment of the mentally ill within the black community and overall treatment of blacks in the healthcare system
- Use the "Social Distance Scale"
- Ultimately find effective ways to educate people on mental illness
- Find ways to destigmatize mental illness/ mental health
- How the media affects perception of mental illness

Acknowledgements

C-STEP/McNair Program at The College at Brockport
TRIO

Barbara Thompson

Helen Cheves

Dr. Waleed

Dr. Boston

Herma Volpe-Van Dijk

Andrea Newman

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